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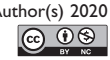

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Cultural History, Ritual and Performance: George L. Mosse in Context

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Abstract
George L. Mosse took a 'cultural turn' in the latter part of his career, but still early enough to make a pioneering contribution to the study of political culture and in particular what he called political 'liturgy', including marches, processions, and practices of commemoration. He adapted to the study of nationalism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the approach to the history of ritual developed by historians of medieval and early modern Europe, among them his friend Ernst Kantorowicz. More recently, the concept of ritual, whether religious or secular, has been criticized by some cultural historians on the grounds that it implies a fixed 'script' in situations that were actually marked by fluidity and improvisation. In this respect cultural historians have been part of a wider trend that includes sociologists and anthropologists as well as theatre scholars and has been institutionalized as Performance Studies. Some recent studies of contemporary nationalism in Tanzania, Venezuela and elsewhere have adopted this perspective, emphasizing that the same performance may have different meanings for different sections of the audience. It is only to be regretted that Mosse did not live long enough to respond to these studies and that their authors seem unaware of his work.

Keywords
cultural history, fluidity, liturgy, performance, ritual

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George L. Mosse became a cultural historian in the later part of his career, at a time, as he wrote in his autobiography, when the word 'culture' still provoked 'either hostility or embarrassment'.[1] The aim of this article is to assess his contribution to this extensive field and in particular to place it in the context of other studies of cultural history, both in his time and more recently. It focusses on the kind of cultural history that most interested Mosse and to which he made his most important contribution: the study of secular ritual (which he sometimes calls 'liturgy') within the wider field of performance.

When he was teaching at the University of Iowa (1944–55), Mosse began turning away from what he called 'the constitutional and legal history in which I had been trained' (he took his PhD at Harvard in 1946, supervised by Charles H. McIlwain) and towards 'a kind of cultural history which I tried to make my own, dealing with perceptions, myths and symbols and their popular appeal'.[2] He considered that 'the real breakthrough in putting my own stamp upon the analysis of cultural history came with *The Nationalization of the Masses*'.[3]

Although he started his journey from a different place, Mosse ended up in a destination close to that of the New Cultural Historians. He came to share the interests of scholars such as Natalie Zemon Davis, Thomas Laqueur, Lynn Hunt and others in this group who were studying rituals, representations, memory, gender and the body in the 1980s and 1990s.

What Mosse did not say in his autobiography is that his cultural turn went through two phases. In the 1950s, as several specialists in the period have reminded us, Mosse's research focussed on early modern religion, in particular the Reformation and Puritanism.[4] In other words, he was already a cultural historian of a traditional kind. In my view, the originality of Mosse's approach to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was in part due to his having entered it by the back door. When he migrated from early modern to late modern studies, Mosse took some intellectual baggage with him, including a belief in the importance of studying ideology, liturgy and culture in general. The former historian of Calvinism became a cultural historian of a rather new kind, the historian of what he called 'secular religion'.

Reading *The Nationalization of the Masses* today, it is difficult not to be struck by the almost obsessive reiteration of a single word, 'liturgy', used in a

1 G.L. Mosse, *The Culture of Western Europe: The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Chicago, IL 1961), 1.
2 G.L. Mosse, *Confronting History: A Memoir* (Madison, WI 2000), 136. Cf. K. Plessini, *The Perils of Normalcy*: *George L. Mosse and the Remaking of Cultural History* (Madison, WI 2014).
3 Mosse, *Confronting History*, 177.
4 G. Caravale, 'A Forgotten Story: Studies on the Early Modern Age', in L. Benadusi and G. Caravale, *George L. Mosse's Italy* (Basingstoke 2014), 11–28. Cf. David Sabean, 'George Mosse and *The Holy Pretence*', in S.G. Payne, D.J. Sorkin and J.S. Tortorice (eds), *What History Tells: George L. Mosse and the Culture of Modern Europe* (Madison, WI 2004), 15–24; J. Sommerville, 'The Modern Contexts of Mosse's Early Modern Scholarship', ibid., 25–38.

metaphorical sense to refer to political rituals. As it happens, Mosse had already used that term in its literal sense in one of his first publications, in 1947: an article written with David Hecht about the Church of England in the sixteenth century and entitled 'Liturgical Uniformity'.[5] Moving between periods in this way was a stimulus to originality in some other historians of Mosse's time, notably Felix Gilbert, who combined studies of modern diplomacy and foreign policy with work on the Italian Renaissance, and Hugh Trevor-Roper, who alternated between research on Hitler and on early modern Europe.

It is well known that historians of the Middle Ages and the Early Modern period took ritual seriously before this topic began to attract their late modern colleagues. A pioneer in this respect was the English Catholic scholar Edmund Bishop (1846–1917), whose collection of essays, *Liturgia Historica*, appeared a year after his death. The English historian Richard Southern considered Bishop to have been a major influence on his own work.[6] Better-known historians who were leading figures in the field include Marc Bloch, whose book on the belief that the kings of Franc and England could cure certain illnesses by touching the sufferer; Percy Schramm, a Hamburg man who belonged to the circle of Aby Warburg and was inspired by him to study royal rituals and symbols; and Mosse's compatriot, fellow-exile and distant relative Ernst Kantorowicz, whose help he acknowledged in the preface to *The Struggle for Sovereignty*.

Kantorowicz is best known today for his book on *The King's Two Bodies* (1957), a study of political theory or, as the author called it, in the language of Carl Schmitt, 'political theology'. Earlier, in 1946, he had published a book about 'liturgical acclamations and mediaeval ruler worship' that included a brief but fascinating comparison with the twentieth century. In this study, written during the Second World War, Kantorowicz suggested that 'political acclamations ... are indispensable to the emotionalism of a Fascist regime'.[7]

EK, as Kantorowicz was known to his friends inspired younger scholars to follow in his wake. Among EK's students, Ralph Giesey published a study of royal funeral ceremonies in France; Sarah Hanley, a book on the French *lit de justice*; Richard Jackson, a history of the French coronation; and Lawrence Bryant, a study of the ritual of royal entries into cities, in his case, Paris.[8] A series of studies of early modern rituals followed: a trickle in the 1960s but a stream by the 1980s. This turn towards ritual suggests some reflections on the history of cultural history.

5 G.L. Mosse and D. Hecht, 'Liturgical Uniformity', *Anglican Theological Review,* 29 (1947), 158–66.
6 I learned this from Southern in a conversation in St John's College Oxford in the 1960s.
7 E. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton, NJ 1957); id., *LaudesRegiae*: *A Study in Liturgical Acclamations and Medieval Ruler Worship* (Berkeley, CA 1946), 185. On his career, R.E. Lerner, *Kantorowicz: A Life* (Princeton NJ 2017).
8 R. Giesey, *The Royal Funeral Ceremony in Renaissance France* (Geneva 1960); S. Hanley, *The* lit de justice *of the Kings of France* (Princeton, NJ 1983); R.A. Jackson, *Vive le Roi! A History of the French Coronation from Charles V to Charles X* (Chapel Hill, NC 1984); L.M. Bryant, *The King and the City in the Parisian Royal Entry Ceremony: Politics, Ritual and Art in the Renaissance* (Geneva 1986).

Culture is more visible from outside than from inside, where many practices are so well known that they come to seem natural. Hence, it is surely no accident that anthropologists have made a major contribution to its study or that historians of the ancient, medieval and early modern worlds made the cultural turn before their late modern colleagues. Anthropological studies of ritual go back a long way: in Britain to William Robertson Smith and James Frazer, and in France to Émile Durkheim, who argued that ritual is the glue that holds society together.[9] It is therefore no surprise to find that studies of medieval and early modern rituals followed the rise of the movement of historical anthropology from the 1970s onwards in the United States, France, Britain, Italy, Australia and elsewhere. Early practitioners of this approach included Natalie Zemon Davis, Jacques Le Goff, Keith Thomas, Carlo Ginzburg and Rhys Isaac. Their objects of study included not only royal rituals in the tradition of Bloch, Schramm and Kantorowicz but also the civic rituals of early modern cities, such as Florence and Venice and popular rituals such as charivari.[10] Historians of later periods were slower to enter the field, despite the potential interest of a historical anthropology of the rituals of diplomacy, the army, the law, and of parliaments and other organizations, from clubs to colleges.

These practices were sometimes viewed as 'texts' that told the 'reader' (in inverted commas), a good deal about the culture in which they were performed. In so doing, historians such as Robert Darnton were following the lead of anthropologists, notably Victor Turner (the son of an actress and the scholar who coined the phrase 'social drama') and Clifford Geertz, whose essay on the cockfight in Bali, 'Deep Play', was cited in many historical studies following its publication in 1972. For a time, Geertz and Darnton organized a joint seminar at Princeton.[11] Conversely, some studies of texts replaced them in their original contexts of performances at court and elsewhere. For example, the French historian Roger Chartier, best known for his studies of the history of the book, also produced an exemplary study of Molière's play Georges Dandin, noting that the play was presented at the court of Louis XIV together with

9 R. Ackerman, 'Frazer on Myth and Ritual', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 36 (1975), 115–34; D.E. Greenwald, 'Durkheim on Society, Thought and Ritual', *Sociological Analysis*, 34 (1973), 157–68.

10 R. Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence* (New York, NY 1980); E. Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* (Princeton, NJ 1981).Three important collections of essays on ritual from the 1980s are J. Le Goff and J.-C. Schmitt (eds), *Le charivari* (Paris 1981); S. Wilentz (ed.), *Rites of Power* (Princeton NJ 1985) and D. Cannadine and S. Price (eds), *Rituals of Royalty* (Cambridge 1987).

11 C. Geertz, 'Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight', *Daedalus*, 101 (Winter, 1972), 1–37, reprinted in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York, NY 1973); R. Darnton, 'A Bourgeois Puts His World in Order: The City as a Text', in R. Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre* (New York, NY 1984), 107–44; cf.Ronald G. Walters, 'Signs of the Times: Clifford Geertz and Historians', *Social Research*, 47 (1980), 537–56.

ballets and other entertainments, all of them 'set into the bigger framework of a court fête'.[12]

Studies of nineteenth- and twentieth-century rituals lagged behind early modern ones, despite the stimulus given by Eric Hobsbawm by launching the concept of the 'invention of tradition' and focusing on the later nineteenth century.[13] Mosse was still on his own when he published a review article in 1969, citing Franz Boas and Claude Lévi-Strauss in the course of an argument in favour of a historical anthropology of mass movements.[14] The review was followed by a substantive article on 'The Political Liturgy of Nationalism' (1973) and this in turn by *The Nationalization of the Masses* (1975), the book that Mosse himself called his 'real breakthrough'.[15] In it he discussed monuments, the symbolism of fire and blood and festivals of gymnasts, dancers and sharpshooters as so many examples of what he called 'national self-representation'. To the concepts of 'political religion' and 'secular liturgy' he added references to political 'cults', 'martyrs', 'shrines' and 'pilgrimages'.[16] In this way he made a significant contribution to ritual studies alongside the major contribution to the study of nationalism and fascism for which he is best known.

Mosse was just ahead of the trend. A year after *The Nationalization of the Masses*, three studies of festivals appeared in France. Yves Bercé, for instance, studied thhe ritualization of early modern revolt, paying particular attention to the links between rebellions and festivals, a theme that was taken up by Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie in a dramatic study of a sixteenth-century Carnival that turned into a battle between nobles and commoners. Particularly important was Mona Ozouf's book on the *fêtes* of the French Revolution, offering another example of political religion.[17] It was later cited by Mosse in *Fallen Soldiers*, a study in which he engages with a new trend in cultural history, the study of memory and commemoration, engaging in a dialogue with Jay Winter.[18] The three studies of festivals, one of which may have been inspired by the 'events' of 1968 in Paris, were followed

12 R. Chartier, *Forms and Meanings: Texts, Performances and Audiences from Codex to Computer* (Philadelphia PA, 1995), 43–82.

13 D. Cannadine, 'The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the Invention of Tradition, c.1820–1977', in E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge 1983), 101–64.

14 G.L. Mosse, 'History, Anthropology and Mass Movements', *American Historical Review*, 75 (1969), 447–52.

15 G.L. Mosse, 'Mass Politics and the Political Liturgy of Nationalism', in E. Kamenka (ed.), *Nationalism: the Nature and Evolution of an Idea* (Canberra 1973); Id., *The Nationalization of the Masses: Political Movements and Mass Symbolism in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars Through the Third Reich* (New York, NY 1975); Id., *Confronting History*, 177.

16 G.L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York, NY 1990), 36, 46, 70ff, 152ff, etc.

17 M. Ozouf, *La fête révolutionnaire, 1789–99* (Paris 1976); M. Vovelle, *Les Métamorphoses de la fête en Provence de 1750 à 1820* (Paris 1976); Y. Bercé, *Fête et révolte* (Paris 1976); E. Le Roy Ladurie, *Le Carnaval de Romans* (Paris, 1979).

18 Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*, 36, 229.The book makes no mention of a study by Kantorowicz, '*Pro Patria Mori* in Medieval Political Thought', *American Historical Review*, 56 (1951), 472–92, which begins with the views on patriotism expressed by Cardinal Mercier in 1914.

by some important studies of nineteenth-century rituals, among them Geertz's analysis of what he called the 'theatre state' in Bali; studies of royal, republican and imperial rituals in Britain, France, Germany, Russia and Japan; and most famous of all, the collection of essays on 'the invention of tradition' published in 1983, in which Eric Hobsbawm played a leading role.[19] Oddly enough, Hobsbawm made no reference to Mosse's work in his introduction to that volume. Conversely, Mosse expressed 'complete disagreement' with the idea of invented traditions. Despite their common interests, neither scholar mentioned the other in their autobiographies.[20]

The law was a subject calling out for analysis in terms of ritual and theatre. Executions were viewed as a 'theatre of fear' by the German historian Richard van Dülmen, while the rituals, performances and dramas of American courtrooms were studied by Rhys Isaac, Anthony Roeber and Robert St George.[21] By the end of the 1990s, so many studies of this kind had been published that a sense of diminishing intellectual returns from this field was encouraging cultural historians to look for new pastures, except perhaps in the case of centenaries and other commemorations, an approach supported by the continuing memory boom.[22]

In any case, the concept of ritual, and especially the idea of a clear distinction – indeed, an opposition – between ceremony and festival on one side and ordinary life on the other, has come to appear increasingly problematic to scholars in a variety of disciplines, from anthropology to religious studies. The anthropologist Jack Goody wrote an article 'against ritual', criticizing it as vague and for supporting an over-simple dichotomy between Us and Them. For her part Catherine Bell, from a department of religious studies argued, in an influential book, that 'ritual acts are not a clear and closed category of social behavior' so that it is more fruitful to think in terms of a greater or lesser degree of ritualization.[23]

19 C. Geertz, *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali* (Princeton, NJ 1980); Hobsbawm and Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition*; Cannadine, 'The British Monarchy'; R. Braun and D. Gugerli, *Macht des Tanzes, Tanz der Mächtigen: Hoffeste und Herrschaftzeremoniell, 1550–1914* (Munich 1993); T. Fujitani, *Splendid Monarchy: Power and Pageantry in Modern Japan* (Berkeley, CA 1996); O. Ihl, *La fête républicaine* (Paris 1996); M.N. Truesdell, *Spectacular Politics: Louis Napoleon and the Fete Imperial, 1848–1870* (Oxford 1997); R.S. Wortman, *Scenarios of Power*, vol.2, *From Alexander II to the Abdication of Nicholas II* (Princeton, NJ 2000).

20 R. Moro, 'Mosse, the Cultural Turn and the Cruces of Modern Historiography', in Benadusi and Caravale (eds), *Mosse's Italy*, 131–6.

21 R. van Dülmen, *Theater des Schreckens: Gerichtspraxis und Strafrituale in der frühenNeuzeit* (Munich 1985); Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia 1740–1790* (Chapel Hill, NC 1982), 88–94; A. G. Roeber, 'Authority, Law and Custom: The Rituals of Court Day in Tidewater Virginia, 1720–1750', in R.B. St George (ed.), *Material Life in America, 1600–1860* (Boston, MA 1988), 419–38; St George, 'Massacred Language: Courtroom Performance in Eighteenth-Century Boston', in Id. (ed.), *Possible Pasts: Becoming Colonial in Early America* (Ithaca, NY 2000), 327–56.

22 J. Gillis (ed.), *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton NJ 1994); K. Tilmans, F. van Vree and J. Winter (eds), *Performing the Past: Memory, History and Identity in Modern Europe* (Amsterdam 2010).

23 J. Goody, 'Against Ritual', in S.F. Moore and B.G. Myerhoff (eds), *Secular Ritual* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ 1977), 25–35; C. Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Oxford 1992), 74.

If the concept of ritual was to be abandoned, or at least used less frequently and with more care, what might take its place? The obvious candidate was and is the idea of performance, a more flexible term than 'ritual' or the 'script' or 'programme' that a ritual follows or at any rate is supposed to follow. Some leading anthropologists had already taken up the idea in the 1970s, not only to study ritual but gossip and verbal art as well.[24]

Some studies published in the 1980s or later expressed an increasing awareness that on a given occasion, 'something can always go wrong'.[25] Indeed, there are often discrepancies between the programme and 'what actually happened'. For example, the diary of a sixteenth-century papal master of ceremonies, Paris de Grassis, reveals that the pope himself, Julius II, was impatient with traditional conventions and could not be prevented from doing things in his own way.[26] Again, a study of the ritual of eighteenth-century English executions concentrated on the reactions of the crowd at Tyburn(a village near London) and what the author, Thomas Laqueur, called the 'unexpected turns' that sometimes occurred, moving from hostility to sympathy with the criminal.[27]

Like 'performance', the concept of 'social drama' (coined by Victor Turner in 1957), became increasingly successful at this time.[28] It too was taken up by historians writing about crises, whether they were concerned with the seventeenth century or the twentieth.[29] Following the lead of anthropologists once again, cultural historians were widening their interests in the 1980s and 1990s to include not only special occasions but also the everyday world. In the spirit of the British critic Raymond Williams, who wrote in the 1950s, that 'culture is ordinary', these historians were practising what the Germans call *Alltagsgeschichte*, 'the history of the everyday'. They were examining everyday life from a cultural point of view, looking at the role of symbols and the ideas that they symbolize.[30] The Russian scholar

24 J. Fernandez, 'The Performance of Ritual Metaphors', in J. David Sapir and J. Christopher Crocker (eds), *The Social Use of Metaphor: Essays on the Anthropology of Rhetoric* (Philadelphia, PA 1977), 100–31; S. Tambiah, *A Performative Approach to Ritual* (Oxford 1979).

25 E. Schieffelin (1996) 'On Failure and Performance', in C. Laderman and M. Roseman (eds), *The Performance of Healing* (New York, NY 1996), 59–89, at 60.

26 P. Burke, *Historical Anthropology of Early Modern Italy: Perception and Communication* (Cambridge 1987), 177.

27 T. W. Laqueur, 'Crowds, Carnival and the State in English Executions, 1604–1868', in A. Lee Beier and D. Cannadine (eds), *The First Modern Society* (Oxford 1989), 305–55.

28 V. Turner, *Schism and Continuity in an African Society: A Study of Ndembu Village Life* (Manchester 1957); Id., *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca, NY 1974).

29 P. Burke, 'The Virgin of the Carmine and the Revolt of Masaniello', *Past and Present*, 99 (1983), 3–21; R.E. Wagner–Pacifici, *The Moro Morality Play: Terrorism as Social Drama* (Chicago, IL 1986).

30 L. Hunt, *Politics, Culture and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley, CA 1984), especially 52–86, 'Symbolic Forms of Political Practice'; B. Scribner, 'The Impact of the Reformation on Daily Life', in G. Jaritz (ed.), *Mensch und Objektim Mittelalter* (Vienna 1990); 315–43; R.-E. Mohrmann, 'Everyday Culture in Early Modern Times', *New Literary History*, 24 (1993), 75–86; R. Williams, 'Culture is Ordinary' (1958: reprinted in his *Resources of Hope: Culture, Democracy, Socialism* [London 1989]), 3–14.

Juri Lotman was a pioneer in this field, publishing in 1977 a study of what he called the 'poetics' of everyday behaviour in eighteenth-century Russia, in which he argued that the westernization of Russia, particularly the Russian court, turned the nobility into foreigners in their own country who had to learn the new rules of deportment.[31]

In this situation, the idea of performance appeared to be just what was needed. It began to be utilized in the history of everyday life, following the lead of sociologists such as Erving Goffman, who had written about self-presentation in the 1950s. Social historians became increasingly interested in attempts to 'pass' – for white, for male, for noble, for middle class and so on – by performing these roles on ordinary occasions with more or less success. In these attempts to change their status, these people were assisted by the growth of cities. In large cities it was and is necessary to judge individuals whom one does not know by appearances, including clothes, gestures and accents.[32]

Another area of everyday life that has been studied in terms of performance is that of social attitudes. For example, Peter Bailey argued in an article published as long ago as 1978 that Victorian respectability was not a value instilled into a portion of the working class but a role that they played in the drama of everyday life. At a more general level, the political anthropologist James C. Scott suggested that many subordinate groups – slaves, serfs, peasants, untouchables and so on – have performed deference to their social superiors in public while expressing what they really thought and felt in private. Fortunately for historians, this form of 'everyday resistance' has left some evidence in what Scott calls the 'hidden transcripts'.[33]

Cultural historians found themselves converging with specialists in theatre studies in Berlin, Vienna, New York and elsewhere, since both groups were taking an increasing interest on performances offstage, often in the street.[34] Sociologists joined in, focusing on social and political performances.[35] Historians have been writing about official political rituals such as coronations for nearly a hundred years, as we have seen. In the twenty-first century, a group of scholars from

31 J. Lotman, 'The Poetics of Everyday Behavior in Eighteenth-Century Russian Culture' (1977). English translation in A.D. Nakhimovsky and A.S. Nakhimovsky (eds), *The Semiotics of Russian Cultural History* (Ithaca, NY 1985), 67–94.

32 R. Dekker and L. Van de Pol, *The Tradition of Female Transvestism in Early Modern Europe* (London 1989); M.C. Sánchez and L. Schlossberg (eds), *Passing: Identity and Interpretation in Sexuality, Race and Religion* (New York, NY 2001); P. Burke, 'Imagining Identity in the Early Modern City', in C. Emden, C. Keen and D. Midgley (eds), *Imagining the City* (2 vols., Oxford 2006), vol.1, 23–38.

33 P. Bailey, 'Will the Real Bill Banks Please Stand Up? Towards a Role Analysis of Mid-Victorian Working-Class Respectability', *Journal of Social History*, 12 (1978), 336–53; J.C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, CN 1990).

34 On the theatre side, leading figures include Richard Schechner, author of *Performance Theory* (London, 1988) and *The Future of Ritual* (London, 1993) and Erika Fischer-Lichte, author of *Performativität: Eine Einführung* (Bielefeld 2012).

35 J.C. Alexander, B. Giesen and J.L. Mast (eds), *Social Performance: Symbolic Action, Cultural Pragmatics and Ritual* (Cambridge 2006); J.C. Alexander, *Performative Revolution in Egypt: An Essay in Cultural Power* (London 2011).

different disciplines began to study movements of revolt in this way, thus moving from the idea of the 'theatre state' to the theatre of revolution, or at least of protest. The new studies reflect the performative trend, referring again and again to 'scripts', or, in the wake of the historical sociologist Charles Tilly, to a 'repertoire' of contention, including traditional routines such as smashing windows, sacking houses and erecting barricades, together with new ones such as burning flags, buses and cars, going on marches and occupying buildings and squares. Needless to say, the forces of order responded by inventing what might be described as a 'counter-repertoire'or an 'arsenal' of practices. This arsenal included cavalry charges, followed later by the use of tanks, tear-gas, rubber bullets and water cannon, by blocking squares and more recently by disrupting the online communications that allowed large groups of rioters to converge on a particular site and gave them information about possible attacks by policemen or soldiers.

Collective actions that used to be viewed as spontaneous generally follow these routines, which allow people who had not come together before to act collectively, knowing what to do next because actions followed a traditional sequence. The routines are of course adapted to the local circumstances, including the spaces in which protest takes place. Tilly compared this mixture of routine and improvisation to the practices of jazz musicians.[36] Improvisation is of course necessary in fluid situations in which the behaviour of the forces of order cannot be predicted.

This interest in fluid performances rather than fixed rituals is just what might be expected in our time, the age of what the late Zygmunt Bauman, another sociologist, called 'liquid modernity'. As so often, changes in the present encourage historians to view the past from new angles. Nonetheless, the idea of political action as performance would not have surprised seventeenth-century writers. Contemporary commentators on the revolt of Naples in 1647, for instance, described it as a tragedy or tragicomedy, while the great history of the Council of Trent by Paolo Sarpi, first published in 1619, was built around the contrast between public performance and the reality behind the appearances, making the book a major contribution to what Italians now describe as *dietrologia*.[37]

Again, the court of Louis XIV was viewed by a close observer, the Duc de Saint-Simon, in terms of what he variously called *scène*, *comédie*, or *théâtre*, not to mention *les derrières*, what went behind the scenes. The memoirs of a young Italian nobleman, Primi Visconti, who visited the court, support Saint-Simon. 'In public', Visconti wrote, the king 'is full of gravity and very different from his manner in private [*particolare*]. Finding myself in his chamber together with other courtiers, I have observed on a number of occasions that if the door is accidentally

36 C. Tilly, *Regimes and Repertoires* (Chicago, IL 2006); Alexander, *Revolutionary Performance*. On improvisation, Tilly, *Contentious Performances* (Cambridge 2008), xi. On the trend in general, D. Conquergood, 'Poetics, Play, Performance and Power: The Performance Turn in Anthropology', *Text and Performance Quarterly*, 9 (1989), 81–8.

37 P. Burke, 'Varieties of Performance in Seventeenth-Century Italy', in P. Gillgren and M. Snickare (eds), *Performativity and Performance in Baroque Rome* (Farnham 2012), 15–23; Id., 'Some Seventeenth-Century Anatomists of Revolution', *Storia della Storiografia*, 20 (1993), 23–35.

opened, or if he goes out, he immediately composes his posture and changes his facial expression, as if he was going to appear on stage.' What the French political scientist – and politician – Roger-Gérard Schwartzenberg called *l'état-spectacle*, arguing that it was a creation of the age of television, has a much longer history.[38]

There is a stronger case for suggesting that politics became more self-consciously theatrical than before in the twentieth century, when leaders became more self-conscious about their 'image' and might employ public relations firms to give them advice on how to present themselves, as in the case of Mrs. Thatcher and Saatchi and Saatchi. Today, Vladimir Putin poses bare-chested on horseback to show off his virility. Historians of the twentieth century will remember that Mussolini had himself photographed running along a beach, wearing nothing but shorts.[39]

The idea of performance has not only shaped political history, as the last few examples suggest, but also relatively new approaches to the past, among them the history of emotions and the history of knowledge. The 'affective turn' of the last few decades, in other words the rapid rise of the history of the emotions, including its institutionalization in academic centres from Germany to Australia, is well known. It would not have surprised Mosse, or even Kantorowicz. However, the turn has generated controversy. One of the main problems is the following: Do humans simply feel emotions, or are they more active? Do we perform anger, love, generosity and so on? William Reddy, a former historian of France, has proposed what he calls a new 'framework' for the history of emotions. Drawing on the ideas of the British philosopher John Austin, as well as on some anthropologists who were inspired by him, Reddy discusses the language of emotions in terms of 'performative utterances', which do not so much describe situations as bring them about. According to this view a declaration of love, for instance, is a strategy directed to encouraging, amplifying or even transforming the feelings of the beloved. A novelty for historians two decades ago, the idea of the performance of emotions is becoming accepted in the discipline.[40]

Performance also has a place in the recent 'cognitive turn', the rise of the history of knowledge, or 'cultures of knowledge', a field that was gradually expanding in the 1980s and 1990s and more rapidly ever since. This expansion has taken place for both internal and external reasons. By 'internal' reasons, I mean debates within the profession. The history of knowledge might be described a child of the history of science, developing at a time when scholars in this field were becoming increasingly uncomfortable with the binary opposition between western science and

38 P. Burke, 'On the Margins of the Public and the Private: Louis XIV at Versailles', *International Political Anthropology*, 2 (2009), 29–36; R.-G. Schwartzenberg, *L'état-spectacle: essai sur etcontre le star system en politique* (Paris 1977).

39 A range of recent examples may be found in Schwartzenberg, *L'état-spectacle 2: politique, casting et medias* (Paris 2009).

40 W. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for a History of Emotions* (Cambridge 2001); P. Maddern, J. McEwan and A.M. Scott (eds), *Performing Emotions in Early Europe* (Turnhout, 2018); D. Martín Moruno and B. Pichel (eds), *Emotional Bodies: Studies on the Historical Performativity of Emotions* (Urbana, IL 2018).

indigenous knowledges. As for external reasons, current debates about our 'knowledge economy' or 'information society' have encouraged historians to ask similar questions about the past.

The concept of performance may not be central to the history of knowledge but it certainly has its uses in this field. Lectures, for instance, whether 'live' or televised, are a form of 'staging' knowledge. This point was probably most obvious in the case of nineteenth-century lectures on popular science, punctuated as they often were by chemical explosions or electric shocks, but staging was not confined either to that period or to those topics.[41] The skill with which Galileo presented both himself and his ideas at the Tuscan court has been emphasized by Mario Biagoli.[42] Again, the British historian A.J.P. Taylor was a great performer, in his lectures at Oxford (as I can testify from listening to him in the 1950s) as well as in his later career on television. All lecturers perform, whether well or badly, consciously or unconsciously, in their different styles, individual or cultural – Italian, for instance, German or British.

Looking back at *The Nationalization of the Masses* from the perspective of performance studies, two major differences between Mosse's work and later contributions are particularly striking. The first is his focus on festivals at the expense of the everyday, of what is sometimes described as 'banal nationalism'.[43] The second is his concern with general trends, such as the rise of gymnastic or choral societies, rather than with the concrete detail of particular events.

For this kind of detail we may turn to three relatively recent studies of the performance of nationalism by Donald Guss, Kelly Askew and Laura Edmondson. All three were written by anthropologists, though Askew and Edmondson are musicologists as well. All three offer thick descriptions of particular performances, though their approach is closer to Victor Turner (and also to Hobsbawm and Ranger's *Invention of Tradition*) than to Clifford Geertz. One book is concerned with Venezuela, the other two with Tanzania (Askew draws on and continues Ranger's study of 'dance and society').[44]

The authors, who show little or no awareness of Mosse's studies, have gone beyond them by studying the construction of ethnicity, nationalism, and indeed of the nation itself by means of theatre, music and dance.[45] Guss's book on a 'quartet'

41 P. Burke, 'From the Disputation to Power Point: Staging Academic Knowledge in Europe, 1100–2000', in H. Blume, E. Grossegger, M. Rossner, and A. Sommer-Mathis (eds) *Inszenierung und Gedächtnis* (Bielefeld 2014), 119–31.

42 M. Biagioli, *Galileo Courtier: The Practice of Science in the Culture of Absolutism* (Chicago, IL 1993).

43 M. Billing, *Banal Nationalism* (Los Angeles, CA 1995).

44 T. Ranger, *Dance and Society in Eastern Africa, 1890–1970: The BeniNgoma* (London 1975).

45 D. Guss, *The Festive State*: *Race, Ethnicity and Nationalism as Cultural Performance* (Berkeley, CA 2000), whose bibliography includes a reference to Mosse's 'Caesarism, Circuses and Monuments' in *Journal of Contemporary History*, 6 (1971), 167–82; K. Askew, *Performing the Nation: Swahili Music and Cultural Politics in Tanzania* (Chicago, IL 2002); L. Edmondson, *Performance and Politics in Tanzania: The Nation on Stage* (Bloomington IN 2007).

of festivals in Venezuela criticizes the idea that the meaning of festivals resides in a 'text' and stresses the 'plasticity' and the 'flux' of festive traditions. He also emphasizes what he calls 'the pluralistic nature of festive forms', in other words the various ways in which different groups (in this case, ethnic groups) interpret the same performance.[46] The historian Roger Chartier, who was cited earlier, also stressed the 'multiple meanings' of court festivals in a book published five years earlier.[47] In similar fashion, Askew argues that 'Competing representations of the nation are performed in everyday practice by musicians, cultural officers, local politicians, coastal wedding guests, high-ranking politicians, poets, traffic police, Swahili language experts' and others, producing 'a national imaginary in constant and continual flux, always and ever subject to the approval of those who constitute its members'.[48] Studies of this kind may encourage historians of nineteenth-century Europe to ask how different *The Nationalization of the Masses* might have been if the author had asked the same questions as these anthropologists or focussed on the details of particular performative events, including what went wrong. Conversely, one might ask how different these three studies would have been if they had been aware of Mosse's work and situated their cases within the general trends that he described and analysed so well in the case of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The three authors had of course the great advantage of being able to witness and even on occasion to participate in the performances that they studied in the course of their fieldwork, viewing them 'from below' or 'backstage' as well as from above. However, they also make references to the earlier history of these kinds of performance, especially from the 1940s to the 1990s.[49] In any case, it would surely be possible for contemporary historians to produce micro-historical studies of this kind, adopting what Marc Bloch called a 'regressive' method by combining observation of current performances with research on earlier ones in archives, in the files of newspapers and in old recordings.

Today, cultural history faces some serious challenges. Historians of the emotions, for instance, began by following the lead of anthropologists and arguing, or assuming, that the emotional regime, shaped by language, varies from one culture to another. This view has been challenged by neuroscientists such as Paul Ekman (now famous, or notorious, for his contribution to surveillance systems) who claim that there are a few 'basic' emotions that are found in all cultures, including anger, disgust, fear, happiness, sadness and surprise. Neuroscience also underlies or at least inspires the movement for 'deep history' associated with Daniel Smail and others.[50]

46 Guss, *Festive State*, 3, 7, 170–1.
47 Chartier, *Forms and Meanings*, 61.
48 Askew, *Performing the Nation*, 293.
49 Guss, *Festive State*, 18, 34, 143, 183; Askew, *Performing the Nation*, 13–4, 45–6, 70–6, who refers to the work of John Iliffe and John Lonsdale as well as to that of Ranger; Edmondson, *Performance and Politics*, ch.1.
50 D.L. Smail, *On Deep History and the Brain* (Berkeley, CA 2008).

Another challenge to cultural history comes from the rise of the history of the environment. Cultural historians of my generation were interested in neighbouring disciplines, 'soft' sciences such as sociology and anthropology. For historians of the environment, on the other hand, the neighbours are 'hard' sciences such as geology, botany or biology. Still another shift away from culture is revealed by the growing interest in non-human history, including both animals and things. A cultural history of both animals and things is of course possible. A cultural history of nationalism, for instance, might study flags as symbols of loyalty.[51] What is new, and also a move away from a cultural approach, is an interest in what is called the 'agency' of animals and things, whether this agency is viewed as literal or metaphorical. We might speak of a 'natural turn', – except that the division between nature and culture, made famous by the books of Lévi-Strauss, has itself been challenged by a later generation of anthropologists such as Bruno Latour and Philippe Descola.[52]

The empire of cultural history is beginning to contract. All the same, I do not see the future of cultural history in terms of decline and fall. I am confident that this approach will survive. After all, studies of the past cannot afford to exclude the history of the imagination, including the imagined community of the nation and its symbols. The fact that many historians realize this may be illustrated from recent studies in the field of one of George L. Mosse's main interests, nationalism. The year 2018 witnessed the publication of two massive volumes, the *Encyclopedia of Romantic Nationalism in Europe*. Volume Two presents short histories of the many 'cultural communities' of Europe. Volume One, alongside biographies of individuals involved in the study and spread of this form of nationalism, presents topics such as language, oral literature, manners and customs, commemorations and, closest to Mosse, sports associations and choral societies.[53] The tradition of *The Nationalization of the Masses* continues, though like all traditions, it has been developing new forms. However, these new forms build on older ones even when they reject elements of the past. Mosse's friend Ernst Kantorowicz transformed the study of politics in the Middle Ages, thanks to his willingness to take ritual seriously, instead of dismissing it as 'mere' ritual, as earlier scholars so often used to do. A similar willingness allowed Mosse himself to bring about an equivalent transformation in the field and the period in which he worked in his maturity. After Mosse,

51 E. Florescano, *La bandera Mexicana* (Mexico City 1999).
52 B. Latour, *We have never been modern* (Cambridge, MA 1993); P. Descola, *Par-delà nature et culture* (Paris 2005).
53 M. Derks, 'Sports, Pastimes', in J. Leerssen (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Romantic Nationalism in Europe* (2 vols., Amsterdam 2018), vol.1, 72–5; Derks and Leerssen, 'Sports/Athletics Associations', ibid., 142–3; Leerssen, 'Choral Societies', ibid., 144–6.

thanks to his cultural and especially to his performative turn, the study of nineteenth- and twentieth-century politics can never be the same again.

Biographical Note

Peter Burke was Professor of Cultural History, University of Cambridge, until his retirement and remains a Life Fellow of Emmanuel College. He is also a Fellow of the British Academy. He has published 30 books, mainly studies of cultural history, including the history of language and the history of knowledge. His latest book, *Polymaths: a Cultural History from Leonardo da Vinci to Susan Sonta*g, was published by Yale University Press in 2020. He is now at work on a social history of ignorance.